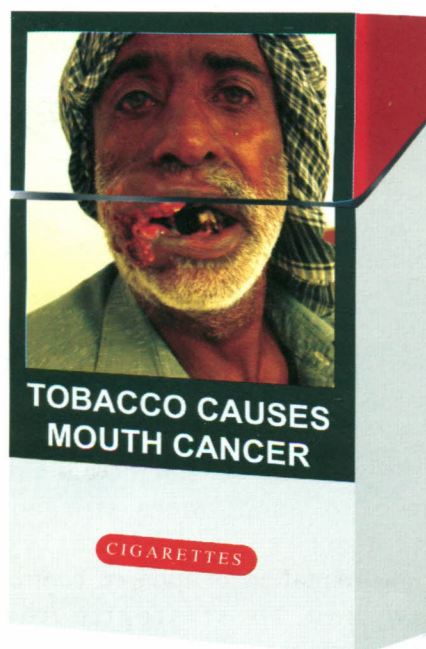




ADVOCACY NEWSLETTER ON TOBACCO Control Reforms

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Government should implement decision to introduce pictorial health warnings

Tobacco use is increasing in low-income countries like Pakistan, resulting in more deaths every year. Tobacco industry is targeting the people of developing countries in the name of providing jobs to the poor and generating revenues for the national economies. Not only this, tobacco industry is also aggressively marketing to lure the illiterate smokers by introducing new tobacco package as a promotional opportunity.

The advocates of tobacco control are making worldwide efforts to check smoking, but it is important to pay attention to the developing countries where public awareness is low about the factual health hazards of tobacco. Keeping in view the low literacy rate in these countries including Pakistan (54%), tobacco packaging reforms could prove the easiest and the cheapest way to educate the common man both about the risks and severity of smoking. In this regard it is vital to introduce pictorial health warnings on tobacco packets.

The authorities in Pakistan have yet to deliver on the promises regarding the implementation of a policy decision on printing pictorial health warnings on cigarettes packs and their all kinds of outer packaging.

The commitment is part of an international law better known as Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) to which Pakistan is a signatory.

It is encouraging that pertinent government officials are making efforts to convince the tobacco industry to start printing the warnings from May 31, 2010, as announced earlier, but there is always a danger of last minute 'fine tuning' that may upset the whole plan.

But let us keep our fingers cross and hope that the Health Ministry will keep the word and implement the decision on the promised day. In this way Pakistan will join a select august group of countries publishing the pictorial health warnings, and effectively making their people aware of hazards of smoking.

The civil society is with the government efforts to phase out smoking from the society, because tobacco addiction not only kills thousands of people every year, it also causes millions of rupees spent to cure the diseases caused by smoking.

Pictorial health warnings: an effective way to reduce smoking

Col (Retd) Dr Muhammad Ashraf Chaudhry

There are an estimated 1.2 billion regular smokers in the world, approximately one third of the global population over the age of 15, and the numbers are rising. Globally, five million people died from tobacco in 2008, more than tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and malaria combined.

Although people know that smoking is injurious to health, but smokers do not give much thought to the effects on their health. They also tend to be less aware of effects other than lung cancer (e.g. heart disease, stroke, cancers of mouth, pancreas, urinary bladder and kidney, baldness, impotence, infertility, abortion, premature birth, low birth weight babies etc). Studies show that many smokers still do not know that tobacco causes diseases and premature death. Many others know little beyond a vague notion that "smoking is bad for health".

There is a clear need for effective ways to inform and alert smokers and provide information on how to reduce their tobacco-related risks. Given the uniquely hazardous nature of tobacco products, tobacco manufacturers and governments bear a responsibility to ensure the highest levels of health knowledge possible among smokers. Strongly worded, specific, large label information on tobacco product packages provides important health messages to smokers.

Mandated labels on tobacco products are an effective way to inform smokers of the hazards of smoking, encourage smokers to quit, and discourage non-smokers from

starting to smoke. Many countries require health warnings on tobacco products. However, messages given in small print on the side of the pack clearly lack salience and persuasive power compared with larger messages placed on the front of the packs.

Evidence from global researches have proven the effectiveness of pictorial warnings. Effective health warnings meaningfully communicate information to smokers and others and motivate behavioural change (such as quitting, or avoiding exposing others to second-hand smoke). They also reduce the appeal of the smart packaging and product.

A study carried out in four different countries that have implemented pictorial warnings, shows that pictorial warnings communicate the health risks to smokers more efficiently than textual warnings. In Brazil more than half (54%) of smokers changed their opinion on the health consequences of smoking as a result of the warnings. More than half (58%) of smokers in Canada thought more about the health effects of smoking as a result of the warnings. More than two thirds (71%) of smokers from Singapore said they knew more about the health effects of smoking as a result of the warnings.

Similarly, in Thailand four out of five young people aged 13-17 (81%) and more than half of adult smokers said the new pictorial warnings made them think more about the health impact of smoking.

In Pakistan, an estimated 40% males and 9% females are smokers and this percentage is increasing day by day.



About 100,000 people die due to tobacco-related diseases every year in Pakistan. More than fifty percent of population of country is illiterate and tobacco consumption in form of smoking and smoke-less tobacco is growing in youth and women, the most vulnerable section of society. Pakistan is using text warnings on cigarette packages but they are woefully ineffective at getting attention of smokers, communicating health risks or motivating smokers to quit.

Government of Pakistan, in 2009 announced pictorial warnings on cigarette packaging as a measure to reduce tobacco consumption. Health ministry has adopted regulations in this regard and cigarette packaging will carry horrific images in current year, 2010. It is a great achievement in the history of tobacco control in Pakistan to implement pictorial warnings, however still there is dire need to adopt more stringent measures for effective implementation of tobacco control law and to strategize the enforcement mechanism.

Framework for national tobacco control strategy

Aasma Qamer

Pakistan needs a national consultation with the participation of all stakeholders to review the current legislation and to incorporate remaining provisions of FCTC for developing a comprehensive national tobacco control strategy.

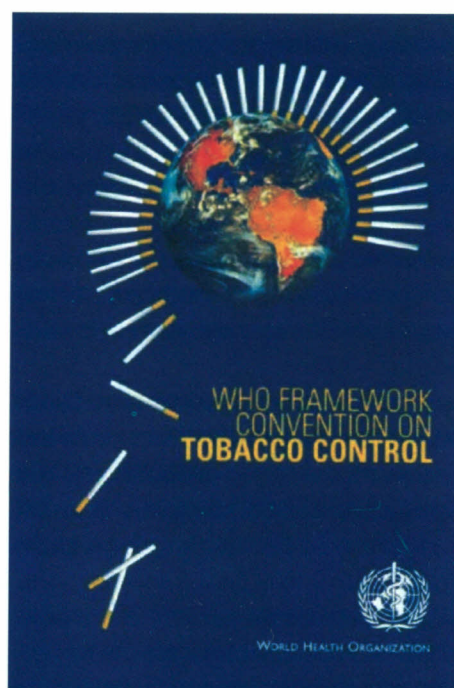
Tobacco control is a major public health issue and all efforts to curtail its use have been far from success. History of tobacco control is just a few years old and it virtually started with the successful agreement on Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in 2003. World Health Organization (WHO), a leading force of the international tobacco control movement, had been instrumental in conceptualizing and developing this law as the world's first international treaty on health issue.

It was unanimously adopted by 192 member states of the WHO at the 56th World Health Assembly on 21 May 2003. The treaty, which synthesises the best international practice for tobacco control, provides countries with guidance on the contents of a comprehensive national tobacco control strategy. If brought into force and implemented to the full, this can be a beginning of a revolution in limiting the global burden of tobacco consumption.

Pakistan has also signed and ratified the FCTC and then important steps have been taken by the government of Pakistan to incorporate its recommendations into national legislation. The current tobacco control legislation "Prohibition of Smoking & Protection of Non-smokers Health Ordinance 2002" has proved inadequate to deal with the

issue of tobacco control in an effective manner.

It is good starting point as the national legislation required 100 per cent smoke-free public places and ban on tobacco advertisements, sale and storage in 50 meters of educational institutions. It prohibits tobacco use in public transport and regulations regarding pictorial health warnings on cigarette packs have been included into national legislation.



But the law has not been implemented in true spirit as it lacks proper enforcement and implementation mechanism. The issue of implementation is closely linked with broader tobacco control policies. It is widely recognized that multiple approaches are required to effectively address tobacco use. Effective tobacco control requires a diverse array of strategies including research, policy and program components. Strategies must be comprehensive,

developed and coordinated to work together and compliment those implemented at the international level.

In this backdrop Pakistan should take effective measures like a national strategy for tobacco control as a way forward on the fifth anniversary of FCTC.

National Strategy for Tobacco Control (NSTC)

A broad agreement between federal and provincial government in collaboration with NGOs is needed for tobacco control. The strategy at federal level should establish a framework with comprehensive, fully integrated and multi-faceted approach for tobacco control. It should focus on three mutually reinforcing components: protection, prevention, and harm reduction.

Pakistan needs to pursue a policy of progressively increasing taxation on all tobacco products to reduce tobacco consumption through price mechanisms.

It is important to establish partnerships with civil society organizations and the private sector (other than the tobacco industry and its affiliates) for advancing the implementation of the NSTC.

Authorities should effectively enforce existing laws, evolve new laws as may be necessary and undertake additional administrative action such as imposition of a nationwide ban on sale and supply of shisha and gutka.

Recommendations to be included in National Strategy for Tobacco Control:

- Strict ban on the sale of tobacco products to and by minors
- Rigorous enforcement of the ban on smoking in public places
- Anti-tobacco health education to be provided in educational institutions though curricular and co-curricular activities
- Development and implementation of a dedicated media advocacy plan to provide health education to help avoid tobacco use.
- Effective counter-mechanisms to tackle the influence of the tobacco industry
- Higher taxes on tobacco products, across the board, to protect vulnerable groups (youth and women) of society
- Effective health warnings on the packaging and labelling of tobacco products, to adequately inform consumers, especially illiterate consumers.
- Setting up a National Regulatory Authority to administer tobacco product regulation
- Effective controls on illicit trade of tobacco products (smuggling)
- Stringent penal provisions to deal with violators of the law

Tobacco Control: How you can make the difference?

By *Mehnaz Ajmal*

Tobacco use is very common in Pakistan and is widely consumed in a variety of ways like cigarette smoking, chewing tobacco, cigars etc. In addition to these, tobacco is smoked in unique local ways, which include "Bidi" (tobacco rolled in dry leaves) and "huqqa" (Hubble-Bubble).



With the introduction of manufactured cigarettes at the beginning of 20th century, tobacco consumption has been rising progressively and assumed global epidemic proportion. Tobacco companies are cranking out cigarettes at the rate of five and half a trillion a year – nearly 1,000 cigarettes for every man, woman, and child on planet. Cigarettes are smoked by over 1.1 billion people, with a decline trend in developed countries and rising rate of consumption of around 3.4% per annum in developing countries. In Pakistan the annual per capita consumption of tobacco cigarettes is recorded as 391 cigarettes per adult per year. Pakistan

is lucrative market for world tobacco companies, which are actively luring the youth to smoking by innovative business practices.

The epidemic of using tobacco, the non-infective yet communicable disease, is spreading fast and requires strict measures. Concerted efforts and quick action are required at the policy, community, and individual level to thwart this epidemic. In order to help ensure the effective implementation of the existing tobacco law at district, provincial and national level, there is need to assist policy makers, parliamentarians, educationists, government officials, religious scholars and health professionals in advocating for tobacco control.

This article identifies many "action steps" which educationalists and religious scholars can adopt to contribute in tobacco control at individual, workplace, community, national and international level.

Educationists

It is a widely recognized that skill and competences needed for working and living can be acquired in a variety of ways outside the framework of formal educational systems. Owing to their esteemed position in the society and especially their influence on the youth, educationists can save hundreds and thousands from the deadly tobacco.

They can set themselves as role models to their students by not indulging in tobacco use both within and outside their institutions and create awareness among the students, their parents and teachers about the disastrous effect and



implications of tobacco on health and environment and promote for a tobacco-free environments.

Under section-10 of "Prohibition of Smoking and Protection of Non-smokers' Health Ordinance 2002", they are duty-bound to display "No-Smoking Signs" outside and inside educational institutions and they even can stop people from smoking in the educational institutions and report against violators, in writing, to a first-class magistrate under Sections-5 & 13.

They are required to ensure "no smoking in school/college buses". Bus drivers and conductors are authorized by law to stop smoking in their vehicles and to file a complaint in writing before a first-class magistrate against violators. (Sections-4 & 6)

A head of an educational institution is authorized by Section-12 to eject a smoker from the educational institution of which he or she is in-charge (Section-12), and report to the police if someone sells cigarettes

to anyone who is below 18 years of age (Sections-8 & 13) or if someone sells cigarettes and other tobacco products within 50 meters of your educational institution (Sections-9 & 13)

Religious Scholars¹

Using religion to improve health is an age-old practice. In Muslim countries like Pakistan, religious scholars are highly respected in the society and religion is central to the lives of people. Religious scholars can play



pivotal role in influencing smoking behavior among tobacco users in their communities. They can easily bring meaningful change in society and in our behaviors through counseling regarding Tobacco

control. Religion and religious authorities are both relevant and important drivers of quitting smoking. Religions also provide opportunities and offer motivation, encouragement and support for healthy lifestyle and well-being.

Tobacco control legislation in most Muslim countries is still at rudimentary stage. The government shall take optimum advantage of this and use the religious scholars for furthering the cause of anti-tobacco campaigners.

By being tobacco-free models, religious scholars can easily tell the general public about the hazardous effect of tobacco use and how it can be avoided and controlled by educating the public in the light of Quranic injunctions and the Hadith of Prophet Mohammad (may peace be upon him) and the 'fatwas' by important religious figures against the tobacco use.

The network of mosques shall be used for various health care and mass educational programmes. The Friday Sermon is another easy way to convince and educate people to quit smoking and convince other religious leaders and scholars to promote tobacco control efforts in their communities.

As a resourceful group, the religious scholars can urged the government to focus on strict implementation of the existing legislation on tobacco control and remove weakness that permits violation of the law.

(Note: The role of policy makers, parliamentarians, government officials and health professionals in reducing smoking will be highlighted in the next volume of the Advocacy Newsletter on Tobacco Control).

¹ <http://www.emro.who.int/Publications/emhj/0102/10.htm>,
<http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/82/12/923arabic.pdf>

Landmark government decision yet to land

Government of Pakistan announced a landmark decision of implementation of pictorial warnings on cigarette packs and joined the select list of countries effectively using picture based warnings to discourage smoking. Ministry of Health decided to amend the Printing of Warning Ordinance 1979 to incorporate pictorial health warning into domestic law and announced on May 31, 2009 that above mentioned warnings will come into effect from January 1, 2010. The tobacco industry was given a time period of six months to comply with the amendments.

But the ministry failed to uphold its commitment and twice delayed the implementation of the decision. Here is the details of media reports about the issue after the announcement to print pictorial warnings:

■ **Landmark decisions for tobacco control;** Minister for Health announced pictorial warnings on cigarette packs by January 1, 2010 (*The News, June 1, 2009*)

■ **Warnings to cover no less than 50% of display area:** It was decided in the meeting of Technical Advisory Group on Tobacco Control that the display area for picture based warnings will be not less than 50% on the cover and outers of cigarette packs with effect from January 1, 2010 (*The News, June 8, Friday*)

■ **Tobacco gurus brace for striking back:** Tobacco industry is

Landmark decisions for tobacco control

SRO on designated smoking areas withdrawn; pictorial health warnings to be introduced; industry prohibited from offering marketing incentives

Pictorial health warning on cigarette pack Health Minister is being influenced by tobacco industry

ISLAMABAD: Health ministry is getting influenced by the tobacco industry as no further steps have been taken since the health minister made the landmark announcement that the government decision regarding the pictorial health warnings on cigarette packs will be implemented. For this purpose a multi-national tobacco company strong presence in Islamabad recently hired a team of foreign expert and influential bureaucrats (earlier) to influence the health minister.

Warning on cigarettes packs

Health Ministry yet to fulfil pledge

FOZIA AZAM
ISLAMABAD

Landmark decisions for tobacco control

SRO on designated smoking areas withdrawn; pictorial health warnings to be introduced; Railways to become smoke-free; tobacco industry prohibited from offering marketing incentives

High ups of Health Ministry and its baseless concerns about the government's decision on new pictorial health warnings are being seen as threats to the tobacco industry.

scheduled to meet with the officials of tobacco control cell at ministry of health to demand an extension in the deadline for incorporation of pictorial health warnings on cigarette packs and outers. (*The News, June 18, 2009*)

■ **Tobacco Industry's Spin of the week:** Representatives of tobacco industry met with DG implementation at tobacco control cell and asked for an extension of two years for compliance. (*The News, Friday June 19, 2009*)

■ **Tobacco Industry active to influence decisions:** Media and civil society organizations showed their strong apprehension on meeting of ministry of health with the officials of tobacco industry without taking civil society on board. Media reported it a threat to the decision of

implementing pictorial warnings. (*The Nation, June 20, 2009*)

■ **Health Ministry yet to fulfill pledge:** Health ministry's pledge to implement pictorial health warnings on cigarette packs seems in doldrums, as ministry due to the mounting pressure of the tobacco industry, is taking no further steps to execute the decision in letter and spirit. (*The Nation, July 1, 2009*)

■ **Health Ministry is being influenced by tobacco industry:** Health ministry is getting influenced by the tobacco industry as no further steps have been taken since the health minister made the landmark announcement regarding pictorial warnings. The lenient attitude of the health ministry indicates its retraction from the earlier decision under the immense pressure of tobacco

industry. (*Business Recorder* July 1, 2009)

- **No extension in deadline:** The tobacco industry left no stone unturned after the announcement to obtain an extension in the lead-time for printing of picture based health warnings on cigarette packs. The tobacco industry had slowly but surely been flexing its muscles to stall the process for incorporation of pictorial health warnings. Mir Ejaz Jakhani ordered the tobacco control cell to immediately finalize the Statutory Regulatory Order for introduction of pictorial warnings get it vetted by the law division. He announced no extension in deadline for tobacco industry. (*The News*, July 29, 2009)

- **No extension in deadline:** Finally breaking his silence, the federal Minister for Health said that there would be no extension in deadline for printing of picture based health warnings on cigarette packs. The decision is highly appreciated by the civic bodies and health experts. (*The Nation*, July 31, 2009)

- **Tobacco lobby may force govt. to delay pictorial warnings on packs:** The cash-rich and well connected tobacco lobby may force the government to delay its decision to carry pictorial health warnings on cigarette packs. Government announced picture based health warnings on world no tobacco day, however, after the announcement, the tobacco industry's bigwigs became active and held a number of meetings with the high-ups of health ministry to reverse or delay the implementation of warnings.

(*Daily Times*, September 21, 2009)

- **Warnings on cigarette packs, Ministry fails to implement directives:** There is a history of tobacco industry's tactics to delay the implementation of pictorial warnings in other countries without much success and the ministry of health should make sure that it will not happen in Pakistan. (*The Nation*, September 25, 2009)

As reported in the media the tobacco industry gained one full year to print health warnings. The ministry of health had maintained secrecy as it silently submitted to the tobacco industry's demand for relaxation of deadline for printing of picture based health warnings on cigarette packs. It shows that the tobacco industry is honest to its cause, but the ministry of health is not. After the latest relaxation allowed to tobacco industry, picture based warnings will now appear with effect from May 31, 2010, rather than the earlier February 1, 2010 deadline, and the January 1, 2010 deadlines announced on the occasion of World No Tobacco Day, May 31, 2009. (*The News*, January 15, 2010)

- **Govt. urged to implement health warnings on cigarette packs:** Tobacco industry is playing all tactics to reverse or at least delay the decision of implementation of pictorial warnings. Media urge the ministry of health to stick to its commitment enshrined in FCTC to which government of Pakistan is a signatory. (*Pakistan Observer*, September 25, 2009)

- **Call to implement pictorial warning on cigarettes:** Smoking causes 100,000 deaths annually in Pakistan and any further delay in the notification and implementation of pictorial warnings would add to the toll of the death caused by tobacco industry and the figure is mounting at a rate of 273 deaths daily. These frightening figures leave little room for delay and complacency. (*Business Recorder*, October 9, 2009)

- **Health ministry still to enforce laws:** With just eighty-one days left in the given deadline to the tobacco industry, Ministry of Health is yet to notify legislation that restricts the industry to comply with printing the pictorial health warnings cigarette packs by January 2010. Despite the fact that legislation has been done and vetted, still there is no visible sign as yet of being it notified. (*The Nation*, October 9, 2009)

- **Legislation to be notified early next week;** pictorial warnings to be printed from February 2010: Secretary Health, Mr. Khushnood Akhtar Lashari, announced the notification of S.R.O. in a week and gave the time period for printing of warnings on packs by February 2010. (*The News*, Friday, October 09, 2009).

- **Pictorial warnings on cigarette packs delayed:** The health ministry has again delayed introduction of pictorial warnings on cigarette packs by tobacco industry till May 2010. Sources claim the cash rich tobacco industry has influenced the ministry to stall the decision. (*Daily Times* January 14, 2010)

Cigarette smoking may raise prostate cancer risk

Cigarette smoking may increase a man's risk for developing and dying from prostate cancer, pooled data from 24 studies involving 21,600 men with the disease indicates.

Prostate cancer is the most common of all cancers striking U.S. men. Estimates from 2008 show 186,000

new prostate cancer cases and 28,000 deaths, yet the cause remains elusive.

In the American Journal of Public Health, Dr. Michael Huncharek and colleagues report results of their "meta-analysis" -- a research method that pools findings from numerous studies to better illuminate risks not clearly shown in previous individual studies.

They found "surprisingly consistent evidence that both the chance of developing prostate cancer and dying from prostate cancer increases with smoking, even though many of the studies analyzed used crude smoking classifications.

American Journal of Public Health, April 2010

<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE62245F20100303>

Secondhand smoke raises risk of hardened arteries among 13-year-olds

Frequent exposure to environmental tobacco smoke among 13-year-olds is associated with an increased risk of future blood vessel hardening and greater risks of other heart disease factors, according to new research published in Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes, a journal of the American Heart Association.

The study of 494 children showed that those with higher levels of exposure to secondhand smoke from ages 8 to 13 had, by age 13, significantly increased blood vessel wall thickness and functioning problems, both of which are precursors to arterial structural changes and hardening.

The research adds to a growing body of evidence indicating that secondhand smoke has objectively measurable effects on children's heart health. Compared to teens with the lowest tobacco smoke exposure levels, carotid arterial wall thickness was 7 percent greater and aortic arterial wall thickness

was 8 percent greater among teens with the highest tobacco smoke exposure levels.

<http://circoutcomes.ahajournals.org>

"Big Tobacco" still on the march, WHO warns

Governments must do more to protect workers in bars, restaurants and the entertainment sector from harmful smoke, and curb tobacco advertising and sponsorship, the World Health Organisation said on February 26, 2010.

According to WHO, tobacco kills more than 5 million people a year from cardiovascular disease, cancers, diabetes and other chronic illnesses, including about 600,000 from second-hand smoke.

Dr. Margaret Chan, WHO director-general, told, "Most alarming of all, tobacco use is actually increasing in many developing countries. If Big Tobacco is in retreat in some parts of the world, it is on the march in others." She said this in a meeting to review implementation of a landmark tobacco treaty five years after it came into force.

REUTERS

<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSLDE61POWN20100226>

UAE to curb smoking habit with graphic warnings

Cigarette packs in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) may soon carry graphic health warnings as the government moves to persuade smokers to kick the habit.

The ghastly images, including those of an unborn child inhaling smoke from the mother, as well as a snake coiled around a shisha pipe, would be part of the implementation of anti-smoking legislation in this Gulf nation. The authorities were also looking at the possibility of banning the sale of single cigarettes and preventing them from being sold near schools. Cigarette vendors may also be compelled to get mandatory licenses. BERNAMA

<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v5/newsgeneral.php?id=479752>

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